



# 2022 Environmental Justice Action Agenda

Alabama Institute for Social Justice (AISJ) is committed to achieving meaningful and sustainable systems change in support of under-resourced children and families in Alabama's Black Belt. With a focus on the policy issues of child care, voter engagement, gender equity, and environmental justice, AISJ seeks to ensure a seamless transition for human success from birth through adulthood. Through collective action rooted in racial equity and social justice, we work to drive transformational change and address institutional and structural inequities that particularly limit and undermine the economic well-being of women and people of color.

AISJ's 2022 action agenda highlights the current environmental justice policy landscape in Alabama and the direction of our work over the next year to advance systemic change in public policy, organizational culture, and the public narrative within our government, businesses, and communities.

## **Environmental Justice**

During the 2022 Special Session, the Alabama State Legislature voted to use \$225 million of State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds provided through the American Rescue Plan Act for water and sewer improvement projects across the state, including \$5 million in grants for the installation of wastewater systems in the Alabama Black Belt and other rural areas that are struggling with inadequate wastewater treatment and collection systems. Alabama will also receive millions of dollars through the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, including \$782 million over five years to improve water infrastructure, and additional funds to address legacy pollution and increase community resiliency to climate change.

However, both Alabama and the nation have a long history of injustice when implementing previous environmental cleanup and improvement programs. Longstanding policies of social and racial discrimination have created an unjust system that inequitably imposes environmental harm upon Black, Brown, Indigenous, and poor communities. Despite decades of policy aimed at reducing pollution and improving environmental quality, minorities have not received the same benefits as their white counterparts. Intentionality will be necessary to overcome this legacy and ensure equitable investment of these funds to address the ongoing harm that minority and low-income communities across Alabama face from pollution and environmental damage.

## 2022 Actions

- Advocate for distribution of current and future American Rescue Plan Act State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds in a manner that centers environmental equity and rectifies the historic harms perpetuated in the Black Belt region, especially upon Black and minority residents.
- Ensure that state implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funds center the experiences and needs of historically disenfranchised communities and commit to ensuring equitable outcomes through prioritizing the needs of disadvantaged communities that have been most heavily impacted by a history of environmental injustice.